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SUBJECT: MORMON CHURCH REGISTRATION APPROVED

REF: BRATISLAVA 786

CULTURE MINISTER WILLING TO REVIEW CHURCH REGISTRATION RULE

¶1. (SBU) On October 3, the Ambassador paid his introductory call on the new Minister of Culture Marek Madaric, rumored to be one of Prime Minister Fico's closest advisors. Madaric expressed an openness to review Slovakia's religious registration law, which requires the signatures of 20,000 supporters for a church to be recognized by the GOS, with an eye towards easing the entry barriers. Madaric commented that he had already started discussions within his ministry and within the Smer party to that effect. The GOS is concerned that undesirable groups would abuse an easier registration process, citing an underworld-affiliated person who presented a petition of 20,000 signatures for the registration of an atheistic church. Regarding the Mormon application for registration (reftel), the Minister said their application would need to meet all legal requirements and would be reviewed as appropriate by the law.

MORMON CHURCH REGISTRATION APPROVED

¶2. (SBU) On October 6, the Ministry of Culture informed Emboff that it had approved the Mormon Church's application for registration less than two weeks after its submission. The ministry has not yet made a public announcement about the approval. (COMMENT. The surprisingly quick approval of the Mormon application for registration may be an attempt by the GOS to demonstrate tolerance - in general because of the international censure received since including the xenophobic Slovak National Party (SNS) in the governing coalition three months ago. The GOS may also want to offset the actions by the Trnava police last month against Mormon signature-gatherers (reftel). END COMMENT)

SOCIETAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MORMONS?

¶3. (SBU) A local Mormon cited recent publicity about the possible registration of the Mormon Church as inciting subtle discrimination against adherents of the faith. The Mormon member explained that the landlord of an apartment in Bratislava rented by the Mormons for their missionaries canceled the lease just days after the first missionaries moved in. Despite the signed contract, the landlord offered family problems as the reason he was forcing the new tenants out. While his motives are not verifiable, the local Mormon believes the real reason is religious discrimination.

VALLEE